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Henry Drummond

Cheap corn best for farmers

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CHEAP CORN BEST FOR FARMERS,

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A LETTER

TO

GEORGE HOLME SUMNER, ESQ. M.P.

For the County of Surrey.

BY ONE OF HIS CONSTITUENTS

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

JAMES RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY.

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PREFACE.

His Majesty's Ministers have made one or two ineffectual attempts to obtain for the people of this country the freedom of purchasing Corn wherever they can procure it best and cheapest: but these laudable endeavours have been defeated by those, who imagine that, in that case, their present gains will be materially diminished.

The opponents of cheap Corn are in error; and the mischief which they are doing to the country, by thwarting the Government, is five times greater than the advantage which they are reaping to themselves.

The subject is intricate, and difficult to be understood by men who are not much in the habit of reading or of reflecting. The object of the following pages is to shew to the landed proprietors, that, allowing the people to have cheap corn will

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not be ruinous to them; and to prove to the farmers that their interests are not the same as those of their landlords, but the same as those of the rest of the people; and thence to persuade all to repose entire confidence in the measures which Lord Liverpool and Mr. Huskisson have wisely recommended to be adopted.

A perseverance in the present state of the Corn Laws must lead, sooner or later, to a famine, alike destructive to the rent of the landlord, the capital of the tenant, and the lives of many people—an evil which, while there is yet time, it is the duty of every good citizen to exert his utmost efforts to avert.

Feb. 13, 1826.

A LETTER

TO

GEORGE HOLME SUMNER, ESQ. M.P.

&c. &c. &c.

SIR,

THE price that corn bears, owing to the present duty, is the heaviest burden under which the country now labours. The persons who alone derive advantage from dear corn, are the owners, together with their families, of the lands on which it is grown; all other persons in the united kingdoms, including farmers, would derive advantage from cheap corn. The population of the united kingdoms consists of 20,468,949. The number of owners of lands which grow corn, is about 72,804; allowing five individuals to com-

pose each of their families, it follows that 364,020 persons wish for dear corn, and 20,104,929 persons wish for cheap corn *.

If these assertions be true, it follows that they who profit by dear corn are very few, while they who would profit by cheap corn are very many: that consequently the majority will not, and ought not, to submit to be heavily taxed for the benefit of a few; and the object of this Letter is to shew that the farmers are amongst the majority, who are taxed for the benefit of the few; because the landlords have endeavoured to induce them to believe that it is their interest, as well as that of the landlords, to have corn dear; and they pretended to be sorry for the *poor farmers*, when in fact their real sorrow was for the poor landlords.

* I have no means of ascertaining accurately the number of persons who own land on which corn is grown, but it is known that the total number of owners of estates in Scotland is 7595. Supposing that number to bear the same ratio to the population of Scotland, that owners of estates in England and Ireland do to the population of these countries respectively, the amount will be as follows:—

The Population of Scotland, 2,135,300. Population of England, 11,486,700. Population of Ireland, 6,846,949—therefore 2,135,300:7595::11,486,700:40,856. and ::6,846,949:24,353.

The population of the three kingdoms being 20,468,949, makes the number of owners of land 72,804. Property in land is more divided in England, and less in Ireland, than it is in Scotland; also many persons are proprietors of land which does not produce corn: supposing these variations nearly to compensate each other, the above numbers will probably be found very nearly to approximate the truth.

Whoever understands this question will not find any thing new in these pages. I have, without scruple, made use of the expressions of any writer, who seemed to me to convey correct ideas clearly. I confess, also, that if this were a question merely between the farmers and their landlords, they might have settled it the best way they could, without any interference from me; but there is another class, much more numerous than both landlords and farmers put together, to which cheap bread is every thing, the interest of which has scarcely been glanced at by the disputants on this question, and that is, the class of agricultural labourers. It is impossible that the labourers can understand the reasons why corn is dear or cheap; they *feel*, indeed, that sometimes when they are receiving most money they are worse off (that is, they have less to eat) than at other times, when they are receiving less. In 1813, the money amount of wages was higher than it was in 1792; but owing to the fall in the value of money, a succession of indifferent harvests, high war taxes, &c. &c., the labourers were in a much worse condition. During the last war, they were robbed by the depreciation of the currency*; now they

* To point out the way in which the price of corn may be affected by alterations in the value of the currency, would tend to divert the attention from the main topic discussed in this letter; and it is likewise quite needless to do so, because that point has been treated with great humour and clearness for the last twenty years in the *Weekly Register*.

are injured principally by the monopoly of the landlords, and both causes are equally beyond their comprehension and controul. It is, therefore, a paramount duty, in those who do understand the causes of these things, to endeavour to obtain for the labourer the power to purchase his food at the least possible price; that is, to ensure to him the greatest amount of comforts in exchange for his labour. I shall endeavour to prove that, as far as dear and cheap corn goes, the interest of the farmer and of the labourer is precisely the same, and opposed to that of the landlords.

If the question at issue were simply between what is called the agricultural and the commercial interests, that is, if the question were, whether we should have rich landlords, and poor merchants and manufacturers, or rich merchants and manufacturers, and poor landlords, I should say, decidedly, that it was our interest to keep our landlords rich at the expense of the others. We know from experience, as well as from indisputable authority, that "wherever a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also." A landlord's treasure must be in England, and all his interests and affections must be bound up in her prosperity, however mistaken he may be in his views of what is conducive to that prosperity. A merchant's treasure is all over the world, he therefore does not give to England his undivided affections. "The little I know," said Lord Chatham, in his speech during the debate on the Falkland Islands, "has not served to raise

" my opinion of what is vulgarly called the monied " interest; I mean that bloodsucker, that muckworm, " which calls itself the friend of Government, that " pretends to serve this or that administration, and " may be purchased on the same terms by any ad- " ministration; that advances money to Government, " and takes especial care of its own emoluments." In our own days, Mr. Canning, a statesman, second only to Lord Chatham, says, " we well know " that at this moment there is scarcely a power in " Europe that is not collecting, from the capitalists " of Great Britain, the sinews of war; there is " scarcely a single power that does not look for " resources to the Exchequer of our Exchange. " We are all aware that our monied men lend in- " discriminately to all parties, and those who are " now ' the captains' captains, the true lords of " Europe,' are furnishing arms to those who are " contending against each other. Therefore let " me not be told that I may look for security in the " morality of our money lenders. No, no, let Fer- " dinand himself, to-morrow, show signs of strength, " and a determination to fit out an armament, and " the troops and fleets of Spain, raised by British " capital, will sail from your ports to strangle in- " fant liberty in South America. I defy you to " prevent it, and I defy you to shew any thing, in " the morality of late pecuniary transactions, to in- " sure you against such an event." Mr. Russell gives the same testimony in his Tour through Germany, vol. 1. p. 52. " Frankfort," he says, " in

" consequence of her commercial relations, is so " thoroughly under foreign influence, and so pol- " luted by a mixture of all foreign manners, that " her population can hardly be said to have a cha- " racter of their own. Even the multifarious con- " nexions with all ends of the earth, which have " made her citizens, in a manner, citizens of the " world, have unfitted them to be German citizens, " for they judge of the happiness of mankind by " the rate of exchange. Let no one hastily con- " demn the worthy citizens of Frankfort, for thus " forgetting, in the pursuits of the merchant and " money speculator, the interest of their country; " or at least before pronouncing his doom on their " imagined selfishness, let him study the ports of " London, or Liverpool, or Bristol, and discover, if " he can, a purer foundation for English mercan- " tile patriotism." It has been thus in all ages: *est autem maritimis urbibus etiam corruptela ac mutatitio morum; importantur non merces solum adventiciæ sed etiam mores, ut nihil possit in patriis institutis manere integrum. Jam qui incolunt eas urbes, non hærent in suis sedibus, sed volucri semper spe et cogitatione rapiuntur a domo longius: atque etiam cum manent corpore, animo tamen excurrunt, et vagantur. Nec vero ulla res magis labefactatam diu et Carthaginem et Corinthum pervertit aliquando, quam hic error ac dissipatio civium quod mercandi cupiditate et navigandi, et agrorum et armorum cultum reliquerant.* Cic. de Repub. l. 2. iv. During the last war in Canada, the American and English armies were in

sight of each other for a considerable time, and neither could move for want of money. The English general applied to the English merchants for some dollars, offering an enormous interest for the loan on the part of Government. The merchants demanded a still higher interest; the aid-de-camp, afraid to agree without fresh orders, rode back to the general. While he was gone, the American general offered to the English merchants the interest they required, and he obtained the money. The American army was the first in motion to attack the English by means of the money obtained from English merchants. During the former part of the American war, it was very well known that English money was lent to the Government of the United States to carry on the war with this country.

The ignorance of land-owners, and their want of liberal principles upon the subject of the corn laws, is a favourite theme of declamation in every assembly of "lean unwashed artificers," from the Common Council of the city of London, down to the lowest town parish vestry. One man, who assumes to himself the character of being a great doctor in political economy, has had the infatuation to write, "let all the industrious classes combine against "their great enemy the landholder. *The land-* "*holders conduce nothing to the prosperity of the coun-* "*try*. Nay, one of the most distinguished of our "political economists, (Mr. Mill) alarmed at the in- "crease of the share of the produce of the soil which "falls to the owner, a share which grows with the

" numbers of the people, actually proposes that the " present rents should be fixed, and made a perpetual " rent-charge on the lands, for the benefit of the " owners of the soil, but that the state should be en- " titled to all future increase of rent, which should " be applied to the benefit of the community." When such absurdities are gravely set forth, it cannot be a matter of surprise that the science of political economy, still in its infancy, should excite the alarms of the timid, and the ridicule of the wise. All sciences must have their satellites of empirics; and although the ignorant will draw from the latter arguments for suppressing the diffusion of knowledge altogether, the true remedy is only to be found in the wider inculcation of better principles. That the landlords have advocated a monopoly of corn is but too true; but before the " Gentlemen in the Commercial and Manufacturing Interest" presume to lecture them, it would be well if they would point out one instance, where they have given up a monopoly, in which they were themselves interested, until it was wrung from them. Have the Common Council of the City of London ever manifested the slightest disposition to abandon one point of their absurd and noxious privileges? are the merchants, who have the management of the Bank of England, willing to renounce their monopoly of unstamped promissory notes, for the engagements of which neither their persons nor their properties are answerable? Did not all classes, connected with the East India Company, cling with inveterate obsti-

nacy to their monopoly of the whole trade with Asia, in defiance of reason, justice, facts, and subsequent experience? Does not the whole West Indian body maintain the right of the planters to the monopoly of sugar, and to be legalized traders in human blood? Did not every class of manufacturers assail the ministers this last year with petitions, that freedom of trade might not be extended to the commodities with which they were concerned? If these facts be so, (and they are matter of undeniable notoriety) it is not to be wondered at that the landlords feel indignant at the false pretences to liberality advanced by the merchants and manufacturers on the subject of the corn trade; since it is perfectly obvious that, whether liberal or illiberal, just or unjust, wise or unwise, beneficial or pernicious to the country at large, it is their own personal advantage alone which instigates their complaints. A loan-contractor, a stock-jobber, a merchant, or a manufacturer, can transport himself any where, and be as much at home in one country as in another. Not so the landlord, and those employed in the cultivation of the land. It is in these only, therefore, that the permanent strength of the country resides; and it is to these only that the honour of the country can with safety be confided; and consequently of all the classes of the British community this is the last whose interests ought to be lightly sacrificed for the advantage of the rest. But it will clearly appear, that the present system of the corn laws does not benefit the land-owners nearly so much

as it injures the others, and that the land-owners greatly overrate the advantage they derive from a monopoly of corn.

The quantity of corn grown and consumed in the united kingdom is computed at forty million quarters*, one third part of which is supposed to be wheat. In case, however, that this calculation be too great, (and it is extremely difficult to calculate such matters exactly) let us take the quantity of wheat at ten million quarters only. Two shillings a quarter upon this quantity of wheat amounts to one million sterling: consequently the land-owners derive the same benefit as they would from the division among them of a tax amounting to one million a-year.

Corn is a very bulky article; the cost of its carriage from abroad would amount to from 7s. to 11s. a quarter, ensuring thereby to the growers here, that higher price than it bears there. If we were to import corn, we should create a demand for it abroad, and consequently raise its price there; and it could not be imported and sold in this country at a lower price than 52s. per quarter on an average†. Wheat was sold at a late market in Uxbridge at

* Supplement to Encyclop. Brit. art. corn.

† From 1820 to 1824, the average price of wheat in New York was 40s. per quarter; the freight would be from 12s. to 14s., making the price in London from 52s. to 54s. per quarter.

From 1815 to 1824, the average price of wheat at Rotterdam was 47s. 9d.: the average quality of wheat sold in Holland is below the average quality of English wheat, by 3s. or 4s.; if to

90s. per quarter; this enormous difference, (between 52s. and 90s. which, if it run over the whole quantity of wheat grown would amount to nineteen millions sterling per annum,) is a tax levied upon the consumers of corn, and divided amongst the landlords: but even at the average price in the *Gazette* of 69s. 3d., the difference amounts to £8,625,000, a sum considerably exceeding that raised on any other article, without taking into the account the effect of the corn laws on other sorts of corn, as well as on other species of agricultural produce.

If the landlords be entitled to have this sum divided amongst them every year, let them have it; but do not let it be raised by a tax on corn—by a tax on the first necessary of life—by a tax on that which makes four parts out of five of the whole consumption of a labourer. If the income of a landlord be £10,000 a year, he does not spend one hundredth part of that sum in wheat; whereas, if the income of a labourer be 10s. a week, he spends 8s. in flour alone. Let the sum which

this reduced price be added the cost of freight, the price in London will be about 52s. per quarter.

From 1817 to 1824, the average price of wheat in the Black Sea was 22s. 4d.; the expenses of freight amount to about 22s. 6d., making its price in London somewhat below 45s: but Odessa wheat is inferior to English wheat by about one sixth, which (7s.) would bring the price to 52s.

The average price of wheat at Dantzic for the last 49 years, has been 45s. 4d. (Solly's evidence, and Whitmore's pamphlet, p. 62.) the expense of freight is about 7s. 6d., making the price in London 52s. 10d.

the landlords are entitled to, be raised by an income tax; by a tax on servants, horses, wine, or any thing rather than corn. It is enough to goad the people to insurrection to continue to levy it on corn.

When corn rises, rents rise; when corn falls, rents fall. The price of corn therefore cannot affect the farmer, as far as his rent is concerned, *excepting during the currency of his lease.* Whenever any law is made to affect the price either of the currency or of corn, a clause ought to be introduced to protect a farmer from being called upon to pay the *value* of more corn to his landlord in the shape of rent, than he was bound to pay at the time the lease was granted. The price of corn affects the landlord. If corn is dear, he gets more rent; if corn is cheap he gets less rent. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should cry out at the thought of cheap corn; but what business has he to cry out for the *poor farmer?* If corn fall during the currency of a lease which he has granted, he need not cry out for the tenant; he has only to reduce the rent in proportion to the fall in the price of corn, and the *poor farmer* will be just as well off as ever. He may cry out *poor landlord*, if he will, and to a certain extent he will cry out justly; but to cry out poor farmer, and at the same time not to lower the rent, would be little better than hypocrisy.

A farmer may have a good or a bad bargain from his landlord; one farmer may have a good bargain and his neighbour a bad bargain; but in the ma-

jority of instances the farmer pays the full value in rent to the landlord. The farmer pays the landlord for the privilege of using the land; but the land is of no use to him for producing corn until he has laid out *his own money* upon it; until horses have been at work upon it; until manure has been carried to it; until labour has been employed upon it; and until seed has been put into it. The less money he has laid out upon the land, the cheaper he has been able to feed his horses, the smaller the price his manure has cost him, the lower the wages he has paid the labourers, the less the price he has paid for his seed, the better for the farmer; the more, in short, all his expenses are diminished, the better for him. If corn rise during the currency of his lease, rent will rise in proportion at the end of it; and if corn fall, he will be a loser as far as his rent is concerned, during the time his lease lasts. If corn rises, rates rise, keep of horses rise, labour rises, the blacksmith's bill rises, the wheelwright's bill rises, expenses of all sorts rise, and the farmer's profits fall. The only thing that is fixed, is rent: whether corn rises or falls, whether expenses rise or fall, he must pay the rent he has agreed to pay, or go to jail. Hence it is of the utmost importance to the farmer that corn should neither rise nor fall, but be fixed, that he may not be living in doubt, but be sure that he never will be called upon to give a larger quantity of corn, in the shape of rent, than he contracted to give at the time when he entered upon his lease. If corn

falls, rates fall, keep of horses fall, labour falls, and profits rise. It is, therefore, to profits that a farmer ought to look, and not to rent. Dear corn makes rent high, and profits low; cheap corn makes rent low, and profits high; nothing is more certain than this: but as the farmer has been led to suppose that high profits are the consequence of having corn dear, it is difficult for him at once to be persuaded of it. I shall go, therefore, rather more into detail, in order to shew that in the long run it is so; and, as it is a point of the greatest importance, he will do well to pay particular attention to this part of my letter.

All commodities are produced by labour. The landlord provides land, the farmer provides horses, carts, ploughs, implements of all kinds, seed, money to pay the labourers; (these things constitute his stock or capital) the labourers provide labour. All that is produced is shared amongst them, and the share that each has is an affair of bargaining, in which each tries to get the largest part for himself. Suppose 100 bushels of corn are produced amongst them, the farmer gives 20 bushels to the landlord for the use of his land; (that is rent) he gives the labourers 30 bushels for the use of their labour; (that is wages) he spends 30 bushels in his horses' food, seed, repairs of implements, &c. and keeps the other 20 bushels for himself; (this is profits on his stock or capital) the labourer gives his labour to the farmer for the smallest amount of food upon which he can keep himself comfortably—the wages of

labour in every country being principally regulated by the sort of food that the people live upon.

But both farmer and labourers want other things besides corn; they want clothes, fuel, beer, meat, &c. and their corn will exchange for the same quantities of clothes, fuel, beer, meat, &c. as have been produced by the same quantities of labour and capital that they have employed in producing the corn. Thus, if it has cost as much labour and capital to produce a coat as it has to produce four bushels of corn, a coat will exchange for (or sell for the value of) four bushels of corn.

Now suppose that in process of time, and no matter from what intermediate causes, the farmer goes to the landlord, and asks for some more land; and suppose that the landlord has got no more land so good as to produce 100 bushels of corn, but he has got some good enough to produce 80 bushels, and the farmer gives him for this land only half the rent he gives him for the other, namely, 10 bushels; he still has to employ the same quantity of manure, carts, labour, &c. to the amount of 30 bushels: and as the labourers cannot maintain themselves for less than 30 bushels, the farmer has only 10 bushels left for himself as profits. This instance will suffice to shew one mode, by which it comes to pass that the poorer the land is, which is worked, the less profits the farmer can make.

The business of a corn-grower is, like all other business, only carried on because it yields a profitable return to the capital employed, and therefore

the profits of a farmer are a criterion of the profits of all employments of capital. Men finding so little profit is to be made, (that is, so little corn to be had for their own share) by cultivating poor lands, take to employing their capital, or stock, in producing other things, such as coats; more coats being made, the makers must give more of their coats to the corn-growers in exchange for corn, so that they will give two coats for four bushels of corn; thus they get no more corn *for themselves* by producing coats, and exchanging them for corn, than they did by producing corn itself directly from the soil. In this way the profits of producers of all commodities are kept upon a level, no man getting a greater share of corn and coats than the other, whether he produce directly one or other commodity, allowance being made for those employments which are less healthy and agreeable than others.

Again, let us suppose that it requires the capital of a farmer for a whole year, joined to the labour of a labourer, to produce 100 bushels of corn on certain lands in England: if he could, with the same capital and labour, produce as much of some other commodity (such as meat, butter, &c.) as would exchange for 200 bushels of corn, it would be the interest of the farmer and labourer not to employ their capital and labour in producing corn, but in producing that other commodity. It is therefore quite clear, that if there are laws which force men, or tempt men to employ their labour and capital in producing corn from poor soils, such

laws force, or tempt them to waste their capital, or employ it disadvantageously to the country, though not to themselves, the country making up the loss which they would otherwise sustain. The farmer, in the first case, when he cultivates only the best lands, receives twenty out of every hundred bushels for himself. In the second case, when he cultivates land of one-fifth less fertility, although he pays only half as much rent, he makes only half as much profits: he is therefore not employing his capital for so great a gain, as if he were cultivating only the best lands; but as it has been shewn in the last paragraph, that the profits of all capitalists must be equal, it follows that all the capitalists in England are not gaining so much profit on their capital as they would if only the best lands in England were cultivated: for as a fall in the rate of profits, owing to the diminishing productiveness of the soils which he cultivates, is true of one man, so is it true of numbers of men, or nations. Hence arises the evil of shutting out foreign corn, as thereby profits on capital are so much lowered, that capital is sent out of the country to a very prejudicial extent.

Let us take another case to illustrate this same point: suppose the trade in corn to be free, and the price of wheat to be 52s. per quarter; and suppose a farmer to take a farm which produces on an average 100 quarters of corn, which would sell for £260. Now he will have to divide this produce into four parts: one part must be paid to

the landlord for rent; another to the labourers for wages of labour; with the third part he will have to pay tithes, rates, bills of tradesmen, to buy seed, and oats for the horses, and to replace any of his stock which is worn out; the fourth part which remains will go to himself, and will constitute his profits. Let it be supposed to be divided in the following manner:—

	Quarters.	Value.
Rent	20	£52
Wages	30	78
Lesser Expenses	30	78
Profit	20	52
	100	260

Hence it is clear, that of the whole produce, the only part which comes to the farmer is that which is called profit; the rest goes to the landlord, or the labourers, or the poor, or the carpenter, wheelwright, blacksmith, &c.: it is clear also, that the less he has to pay to the landlord and the labourers, &c. the more he has left for himself. This is the profit he makes on his stock, or capital, that is, on all the money which he requires to work his farm, to pay the wages of his labourers, as well as to purchase seed, horses, carts, ploughs, implements of all kinds, and to pay for their annual repair. Suppose that the capital he requires for these purposes amounts to £650. In that case the £52 on the value of twenty quarters, which he gets as profits, will be eight per cent. on his capital.

Let us now see who will be the gainer, if corn rises in price one-fourth, or from 52s. to 65s. In this case he will get £325 instead of £260 for his produce; but then his expenses will rise in proportion. His landlord will require of him more rent, and will still take a fifth of the produce, or the value of twenty quarters. The labourers also must have higher wages; for they could not possibly subsist unless they received as before, the value of thirty quarters, and if corn rises, their wages must rise in proportion. In like manner tithes and poor-rates must rise—oats for the horses, and seed for the ensuing crop will be dearer, and the different tradesmen will charge higher for their work. Thus the produce of the farm will then be divided in the following proportions:—

	Quarters.	Value.
Rent	20	£65 0
Wages	30	97 10
Lesser Expenses	30	97 10
Profit	20	65 0
	100	£325

Here it appears, at first sight, as if the farmer would gain by the change, since his profits would rise from £52 to £65; but this is delusive, for *he could not farm at all with only the same capital that he did before*, and he would require a larger capital in proportion. As oats and seed rose in price, and as the wages of his labourers increased,

he would require more money to pay them, so that he could no longer cultivate his farm with a capital of only £650 as heretofore, but would require a capital larger by one-fourth, or £812 10s. Thus his profit would still be only eight per cent. on his capital, and he would be no gainer by the change. In like manner the labourer would not gain by the rise in his wages, since he would have to pay more for bread, &c. in proportion. The only gainer would be the landlord, whose rent would increase from £52 to £65, without any proportionate increase in his expenses.

If the matter rested here, the rise in corn would do neither good nor harm to the farmer: he would still make eight per cent. on his capital. I leave out of the question the precious plight a farmer is in, who is obliged, in the middle, perhaps, of a long lease, to get one-fourth more capital in order to carry it on; and where is he to get it? is he to borrow it of some attorney or banker in the neighbourhood, and make over his sheep, corn-stacks, hay-ricks, and all his other stock as security? But passing by all this, we shall soon see that the farmer is no gainer, but a considerable loser, even if he has more money of his own ready to be employed.

It is not only the wages of the farmer's labourers which rise in consequence of the dearness of corn, the wages of manufacturing labourers must rise in proportion. When corn rises one-fourth in price, their wages must also sooner or later rise one-fourth, or they could not possibly subsist. Now where is the

manufacturer to obtain the money wherewith to pay them? Whatever effect the corn laws may have in raising the price of corn, they cannot have the same effect on coats, hats, or cotton goods. The rise in the price of corn may repay the farmer for the additional wages he has to pay his labourers, but not so with the manufacturer. His commodities are not raised by any similar restriction, and he must therefore take these additional wages out of his profits. Formerly he made eight per cent. on his capital, like the farmer; but the rise in wages will reduce his profits considerably, say to four per cent. This is a reduction to which he very unwillingly submits, and he seeks anxiously for some means of avoiding it. He sees his neighbour the farmer still making eight per cent. and he resolves to leave trade and take to farming. He considers that even if he makes five per cent. only by farming, he will be better off than he is at present in trade; and he determines on outbidding the farmer, by offering the landlord more rent for his farm. He calculates that if the produce be divided as follows, he will obtain a profit of five per cent. on his capital of £812 10s.

	Quarters.	Value.
Rent	27½	£89 7 6
Wages	30	97 10 0
Lesser Expenses	30	97 10 0
Profit	12½	40 12 6
	100	£325

The farmer, of course, can only retain his farm by

offering the same terms, and is obliged to reduce his profits to $12\frac{1}{2}$ quarters, or five per cent. on his capital.

Now let us consider who is the gainer by the rise in corn, the farmer or the landlord. The rent of the landlord has increased from £52 to £89. 7s. 6d. but the profit of the farmer has fallen from eight to five per cent., namely, from £52 to £40. 12s. 6d. Formerly the share of the landlord was 20 quarters, or one-fifth of the produce; but he now gets $27\frac{1}{2}$ quarters, or more than one-fourth; while at the same time the share of the farmer has fallen from 20 quarters to $12\frac{1}{2}$. It is evident, therefore, that the profits of the farmer fall with the general profits of capital, and that whatever he loses in this way the landlord gains.

If wages rise 10 per cent. in any manufacture, the manufacturer will try to increase the price of his goods upon the consumer; but as he only produces in order to exchange with other producers, and as all other producers are in the same state, a rise in wages has lowered his profits, and those of all other capitalists, without enabling them to make a corresponding rise in the prices of their goods. If wages rise in one manufacture, they speedily do so in all others; and thus a rise in the price of corn of 10 per cent. is no advantage to the farmer, because he must give 10 per cent. more for his hats, leather, rent, cattle, &c. &c.

It is not meant that these effects are produced in a day, in a month, or in a year, but that sooner or

later they infallibly take place. For a time, the wages of the labourer may not rise in proportion to the dearness of corn; but in the end they must be sufficient to afford him his usual subsistence, and enable him to bring up his family. In like manner, during the currency of a lease, the rent of the landlord will remain stationary, and the profits of the farmer may not be depressed; but as soon as his lease expires, he will be obliged either to give his landlord a higher rent, or to resign his farm to some other capitalist, who will outbid him. In the long run, the case must turn out as has been stated. The system of the corn laws can in the end do nothing but enrich the landlords, and impoverish the farmers.

A farmer is as much a capitalist as a shopkeeper, or a manufacturer, and the profits of farming capital must in the end be lowered by any cause which lowers the profits of other capital. It is the interest of all capitalists to have the necessaries of life, and consequently corn, among the rest, cheap; because their labourers will then be contented with lower wages. A farmer's gain cannot be permanently greater than those of other capitalists. Even during the currency of a lease, a rise in the price of corn is not always an advantage to him; for if there be a general rise in the price of all other commodities, also at the same time, he must give a corresponding increased price for is coats, hats, horses, sheep, cattle, &c.; and unless during the currency of a lease he has no interest whatever in high

prices, because competition will effectually prevent him from deriving more than a very temporary advantage from them—he has, however, in common with all other capitalists, a very strong interest in high profits; and it is not possible that profits should be high, for a long period together, when the necessaries of life are dear. A high price of corn, therefore, not only is not beneficial to the farmer as such, but it is positively injurious to him. He is injured in two ways; first, as a consumer of corn in common with the rest of the community, by having to consume a dear, instead of a cheap, commodity; and secondly, he is injured in a still greater degree, as an owner of capital, by being compelled to give high wages to all the labourers he employs. A farmer of Indiana in America, where wheat does not fetch a third of what it does here, will derive as much profit from a capital of £1000 as an English farmer will derive from a capital of £4000. "When a nation," says Mr. Cobbett, V. 55. p. 488, "is in a state of real prosperity, mo-
"ney is at a high interest, and labour *in proportion*
"*to the price of provisions* is paid in high wages.
"This is shown in the case of the United States of
"America, where in some of the states the legal
"interest of money is so high as seven per cent.
"The cause of this is, that the profit on agriculture,
"on trade, on manufactures, is so great, that mo-
"ney will yield more when employed in them, than
"when lent at any rate under seven per cent. A
"man who has a thousand pounds in money, and

" who is offered a mortgage on land at six per " cent. in America, says no, I can make much more " interest of it, if I employ it in agriculture and " commerce."

Each class of producers can see very clearly that it is to the interest of the rest that all productions should be cheap, except that which they themselves are engaged in producing. A friend of mine told me that he was desired by a deputation from some manufacturers in iron, belonging to a town which he represented in Parliament, to accompany them to the minister, which he accordingly did. The head man of the deputation began a long panegyric upon the enlightened policy of the government, which had led to so great a freedom, and consequent extension, of trade, by the removal of restrictions and duties; but he begged to observe, that there were some peculiarities in the iron trade, which made it desirable *for the benefit of the country* (not mentioning a word about the benefit of dealers in his branch of the iron trade) that the restrictions on it should not be taken off. The minister replied that, the gentlemen whom he then saw before him were about the 70th deputation which he had received; that they had one and all began with a warm approval of removing restrictions from every trade but their own; and that they all alleged some peculiarities in their own case, which made it desirable that their own monopoly should continue; and all professed to desire this, not so much on their own account, as *for*

the benefit of the country; that, consequently, if ministers had been swayed by every deputation that had come to them, there would not have been one single restriction removed, of which removal, however, they could all see the advantage in every case except their own.

Precisely in this manner, a corn-grower can see that it is a great advantage to the public that cloth should be cheap, that leather should be cheap, that coals should be cheap, that wood should be cheap, that iron should be cheap, that, in short, every thing should be cheap except that which he is instrumental in producing. But if a farmer will reflect a little, and count a little, he will soon see that in the long run, however much dear corn may benefit his landlord, it must be cheap corn, and cheap every thing else that must benefit him. I will not lengthen this letter by shewing the various ways in which the manufacturers and merchants will be benefitted by cheap corn, because I wish to confine myself entirely to the consideration of the interest of the farmers and labourers, and to prove that it is as great an advantage to them to have cheap corn, as it is to any other class of the community.

Nobody can deny that it is better to have all commodities cheap than dear; and the sure way to have them the cheapest, is to let the public buy them wherever they please. The corn laws are intended to make corn dear. The question, then, between the people and the landlords is, whether

it is better that the landlords should submit to a reduction of their rents, or that the whole people of Great Britain should pay a high price for their corn; whether, in short, the landlords can make out a case for taxing the community to put money into their pockets. Now the landlords, instead of shewing us that it is better for us to have rich landlords than cheap corn, which is what they ought to prove, talk to us about "the interests of agriculture." This artifice of identifying themselves with an abstract term, is not without example. When the popish priests attemped to establish their supremacy over the civil power, they said it was for "the interest of religion." That it was for the interest of the priests is very evident; but how it was for the interest of religion, it is not so easy to explain. In like manner, the West Indians repel any interference with the horrid cruelties they daily practice in the islands, under the cant term of "the interest of the colonies." It might be admitted, that dear corn is beneficial to landlords; but in what sense it can be beneficial to "agriculture," unless landlords be "agriculture," it is not easy to see. The artifice, however, is not without its use: "protect agriculture," like "protect the colonies," sounds better than "give me your purse;" and many a man is duped into doing that for the protection of agriculture and colonies, which he would hesitate to do for the mere purpose of enriching landlords, and would refuse to do for

the sole object of enabling sugar planters to murder their slaves with impunity*.

It is by this term, "protection to agriculture," that the farmers have been deceived. Mr. Western, the member for Essex, and the ablest of the writers on the side of the landlords, unites the tenantry with the landlords as equally falling a sacrifice to cheap corn. Another member in the House of Commons, reckoned that 40,000 farmers had been ruined at the time of what was called "the agricultural distress:" but this agricultural distress was principally produced by tricks which were played with the currency; and if the landlords had reduced their rents in proportion as the price of corn fell, instead of talking about "protection to agriculture," not one farmer would have been ruined.

* In the last House of Commons Papers, we find a planter ordering a woman, who was seven months gone with child, to be flogged; she was so, and was shortly afterwards delivered of a child which was born with a broken arm, one eye knocked out, and the head beaten in; proving most unequivocally, as well as from the evidence of the driver, that it was murdered *in utero*, by the inhuman miscreant, her master, to whom, however, *nothing* was done!!—and this is the result of all that the Government has hitherto effected to mitigate the horrors of slavery! In fact, the cruelties, murders, and tortures, which have at length roused the indignation of every man not dead to all the commonest feelings of humanity, are indisputably proved in the abovementioned papers, to be daily practised in all the West Indian Islands, although the planters have, by falsehood unparalleled, succeeded in making some weak people, who are too idle to examine the subject for themselves, believe the reverse.

Dear corn may be beneficial to landlords, although certainly not to so great an extent as they fancy; but so far is it from being beneficial to the farmers, that there is no class to which it is more, and few to which it is equally, injurious. Not only is the interest of the farmers not the same with that of the landlords, but no two interests are more directly opposite to each other.

If, however, the effect arising from dear corn were merely like robbing Peter to pay Paul; if it were only taking a certain sum of money out of the pocket of the consumer, to put it into the pocket of the landlord, bad as this would be, it would not be so bad as it really is. But for every pound that finds its way into the pockets of the landlords, the public are robbed of several—the *loss* to the community is much greater than the *gain* to the landlords.

This will be easily understood, by reflecting that rent must arise from the value of the produce of the land: but rent is only a part of that produce; another part goes to wages; another to various smaller expenses; and another to the farmer as his profit. Yet all these parts must rise in price as well as the part which the landlords put into their pockets; while it is obvious, that neither landlord nor any body else can gain by the price of that which goes into the ground as seed, into the horses and labourers stomachs for food, &c, &c.; and a horse does not work one whit better upon oats at a guinea a bushel, than he does

upon oats at a shilling. The landlords themselves, and their friends, Messrs. Ellman, Wakefield, Iveson, Driver, Webb, Lake, Clutton, and others, state in their evidence* before the House of Lords, in 1814, and Mr. Western, in his "Address," p. 37, assume it as a settled point, that the proportion or produce, which the landlords receive as rent, is one-fifth part: so that, if dear corn operates as a tax upon the public of ten millions sterling a-year, only two millions sterling are divided amongst the landlords, and eight millions sterling are wasted in pure loss, without any body being a gainer. It follows, also, (even upon their own view of the nature of rent) that the effect of opening the corn trade would be to lower rents only one-fifth of their present amount, since the way in which the landlords could be affected by cheap corn, would be so far only as they are affected by dear corn; and if they now receive but one-fifth part of the produce, it can be only as much as that fifth part, amounting to two millions sterling, is lowered in price, that they will suffer, while the public will receive the benefit of the fall upon the whole amount, or twelve millions sterling.

I am the owner of a tract of land, which probably contains a larger portion of poor land, as compared with the good, than most other landowners in this county; yet I am confident, that

* Mr. Lake, one-sixth; Driver, one-third to one-fifth; Clutton, one-fifth to one-sixth; Webb, one-fourth, and so on—varying, of course, according to the different qualities of land.

not an acre would be rendered useless by the opening of the ports for the introduction of foreign corn: and it has been repeatedly shewn, that every acre of land which it was possible to cultivate with profit last year, (when wheat was at 55s. 6d., rye 31s., barley 33s., oats 22s.) might continue to be so cultivated, were every restriction and prohibition abolished, and the public allowed to purchase their corn in the cheapest markets. But such a reduction of price, as would not be sufficient to cause even the very poorest lands now under corn to be laid down to pasture, would so increase the comfort of the labourer, and give such an immense stimulus to industry in general, that the progress of the country in wealth would be accelerated in a degree that can hardly be conceived.

The more the landlords contend that corn would be cheap if the ports were open, the more they prove what a nuisance the present corn laws are. If the corn trade were free, the price of corn would be steady; even a scarcity would not affect the price; for it is almost impossible that there should be a scarcity over all the world at the same time, in America, in the Baltic, and in the Mediterranean; and every farmer knows, and every landlord ought by this time to have learned, that steadiness of price is of the first consequence to all who are employed in the cultivation of land—that fluctuation produces speculation, and speculation produces ruin.

A country, which freely admits the corn of all

nations into its markets, can be scarcely ever exposed to either of the opposite evils of excessive dearth, or ruinous depression of price. If there be a bad harvest in one country, there is a good one in another; and the surplus produce of the latter supplies the deficiency of the former: thus saving the one country from the evils of famine, and relieving the agriculturalists of the other from the ruin attendant on an extraordinary abundance, and fall of prices. But a nation which shuts out foreign corn, denies itself the power of supplying its wants from the resources of foreign countries, and becomes dependant upon the goodness or badness of the harvest in its own country, which in different seasons may vary so much as to cause the ruin of thousands.

The present system is productive of double mischief. By preventing importation, it aggravates all the evils of scarcity when the home crops are deficient; whilst by raising prices, and thereby forcing the cultivation of poor soils, it prevents exportation in a year of unusual plenty, and teaches the farmers to look on the bounty of God as a curse instead of a blessing. So long as the present system lasts, we shall have the same changes, from ruinously low to oppressively high prices, which we have experienced since 1815. At one time we shall be stunned with the complaints of the landlords; and when these have subsided, we shall be assailed with the louder and more dangerous cries of a starving populace. The sustenance of

the people is the last thing that a wise government will suffer to be tampered with; for a man who will fight neither for his country, nor for his liberty, will nevertheless be as ferocious as a tiger for his belly.

When most other commodities get dear, people can either go without them, or wait till they fall again; but this is not the case with corn. If corn really becomes scarce, the amount of misery produced baffles all description. Wages do not rise immediately in proportion, and the whole weight of the evil is thrown therefore upon those who are least able to bear it. The poorest class of labourers is deprived of the food which is absolutely essential to well being, and the class above them is compelled to sacrifice almost all other comforts, in order to obtain the usual quantity of bread.

The landlords say, that the restrictions on the importation of corn are necessary for them, first, because they pay taxes from which the rest of the community are exempt; and secondly, because, as all manufacturers have protection for the articles in which they deal, the landlords ought to have the same benefit also for their corn. But the landlords do not pay all the taxes; and if they take so much from the rest of the community for their corn, the public have less money with which to pay their share of the taxes: for after a man has paid 90s. to the landlords for the same quantity of corn which he might obtain elsewhere for 52s., he is clearly so much the less able to pay taxes on

malt, soap, tobacco, sugar, wine, tea, &c. The argument of the landlords is the same as if they were to say, that the consumers of corn are in a fitter state to pay their share of the fifty-five million of taxes to the government, after they had undergone an evacuation of ten million to the landlords, than they would be if the ten million paid for dear corn remained in their pockets. With regard to their second reason, no manufacturer at this moment derives the smallest advantage from any protecting duty; and if he does, let the landlords exert themselves to have it removed, rather than make it a stalking horse to cover their own monopoly of corn.

The landlords "seem to imagine, that when corn "is brought from abroad, it *takes according to its* "*amount just so much money away from being laid* "*out in home corn.* Error, when once adopted, is "very persevering; but is it then possible that "the great body of English farmers can *really be-* "*lieve* this? Do they not know that it is an exchange "that is going on of foreign corn for *manufactures?* "Now these are made out of the produce of the land "of England, Ireland, and Scotland, in great part; "and observe, if the goods were not exported in ex- "change for the corn, *they would not be made;* and "of course, the amount of them would never be laid "out in *their corn.*" Weekly Register, Dec. 15. 1821.

At the same moment that the ports are thrown open for the free introduction of corn, then or never something may be done towards diminish-

ing the burden of the poor laws; but as long as the landlords contend for their right to prevent the people purchasing corn where they please, they have no pretext for complaint that they are compelled to disgorge a small portion of their unjust gains in favor of the labourers, whom they are defrauding of the produce of their labour, by preventing their exchanging that labour for the largest possible amount of bread.

Instead of making the burdens, which they have to bear, the pretext for their monopoly of corn, the landlords would do more wisely to give up their monopoly, and at the same time compel the ministers to abolish all other monopolies also. They ought farther to insist upon a large reduction of taxation. Taxation is as a blight from heaven on the produce of industry; no struggles of the labourers, no increased ingenuity, no augmented exertion of any kind, can counterbalance the blasting effect of low profits produced by taxation, or by the cultivation of poor soils. Let the landlords insist upon being no longer compelled to pay 36 per cent. for their sugar, 56 per cent. for their coffee and cocoa; £8 per ton for their mahogany; 10 shillings per gallon for their rum, and nearly the same for the indigo which dyes their wool, in order to give monopolies of these articles to slave owners. Let them insist on the reduction of that large proportion of our standing army, kept up, neither for the protection of the state, nor for the splendour of the crown, but to shield the persons of the slave drivers in the colo-

nies from the tardy, though just, retribution of their outraged fellow-creatures. Let them insist upon no longer paying twice as much for their tea as they need pay, in order to keep up the monopoly of the East India Company. The monopoly of the slave owners alone costs all consumers of sugar, coffee, rum, mahogany, &c. and all wearers of cloth coats, many millions a-year*. Let the landlord resolve to put an end to these monopolies, and they will soon find that that, coupled with the reduction of poor rates, price of labour, and all expenses, together with increased demand for the produce of pasture land, and the certainty of not going without rent altogether in seasons of depression, would fully compensate them for the diminished value of the arable land.

I again repeat, that until the ports are open, no farmer, who knows his own interest, will bind himself by a lease; if he does, he ought to take it at a corn rent, that is, with a lease fluctuating with the price of corn; if he does not do this, he puts his fortune, and the independence of himself and children, at the mercy of his landlord, or of the Bank Di-

* Partly by means of this monopoly, the West Indian planters, residing in London, were enabled, in July last, to lay a tax on their produce, no doubt to be spent, as the money voted by the local legislatures has been, in paying editors of newspapers, and in buying seats in the House of Commons, for members who will palliate their barefaced oppression of slaves and free people of colour—a class far superior in morals and intellect to the white residents in the islands.

rectors, or of the Government. By a corn rent only can he be safe ; and a law ought certainly to be passed to prevent his being called upon, at any time, for a higher rent than is proportionate to the price that corn bore at the time when he entered upon his lease.

It has now been clearly shown—

1. That the land owners' monopoly of corn is the heaviest tax which the people have to pay.

2. That the land owners, and their families, are the only persons who gain by this tax.

3. That all other classes, including farmers, are injured by this tax.

4. That of all taxes, it is the one which presses hardest upon the labourers.

5. That the gain to the landlord from this tax is not so great as the loss to the people.

From all which considerations alone, (without reckoning the way in which this tax strikes at the root of the growing prosperity of the country, and impedes its advance in wealth, by which advance only the enormous burden of its debt can become tolerable) it follows, that the immediate abolition of the monopoly of corn which the landlords now enjoy under the present corn laws, is a measure of bare justice and absolute necessity.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant, and

ONE OF YOUR CONSTITUENTS.

October 10th, 1825.

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—*Monthly Critical Gazette, Jan.* 1825.

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